

Translator, Publisher, Ambassador: Wanda Dynowska and Her Indo-Polish Library

Zofia Ziemann

Ewa Dębicka-Borek

Jagiellonian University

The paper discusses the life and work of Wanda Dynowska aka Umadevi (1888-1971), a Polish theosophist, social activist, journalist, poet, translator and editor, who settled in India in 1935, becoming a tireless promoter of Polish-Indian cultural relations. She translated the *Bhagavad Gita* into Polish, and in 1944 established (with Maurycy Frydman) the Indo-Polish Library/Biblioteka Polsko-Indyjska, a publishing house which brought out reference works on Indian religion and culture and literary anthologies, translated from Polish into English and from India's many languages (Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, Gujarati) into Polish, mostly via a third language. Although Dynowska is remembered in both her home countries, her translation and publishing work has been taken for granted and never examined to date. Based on yet unresearched archive material (correspondence and personal papers), as well as the translated texts, including their paratextual framing, the authors present Dynowska as an intercultural agent, placing her activity in the context of the Polish-Indian-British historical, cultural and political relations. Particular attention is paid to how she deliberately constructed and promoted the images of Poland and India, seeing a special affinity between the two nations oppressed by powerful empires: Russia and Britain.

Dynowska's unique enterprise of bringing together two distant cultures (semi/peripheral in Heilbron's terms) by "building a bridge of books between the soul of India and Poland" (as she herself put it) was undoubtedly a commendable effort, but it also be seen as a site of manipulation. The paper examines how she carried out her mission of creating analogies between Poland and India, both on the macro level (in her selection of texts for translation/publication) and in the texts themselves (in paratexts and in the way she translated particular culture-specific items).

Selected References

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